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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NAIROBI 000129

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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - HIGH LEVEL COMMITTEE CONVENES

REF: NAIROBI 107

Classified By: Counselor for Somalia Affairs Bob Patterson. Reasons 1.
4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. This message provides for the record a summary of events over the ten days leading up to a presumed Somalia Parliamentary meeting in Djibouti being arranged by SRSG Ould-Abdallah projected to begin on or about January 24. The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) convened the High Level Committee on January 15 in Djibouti and agreed to a proposal aimed at electing a new president under a unity government. The proposal, formed by a TFG and ARS working group in Nairobi the week prior, outlines an ambitious schedule designed to lead to a new president within 30 days of Abdullahi Yusuf's December 29 resignation. Speaker of Parliament and Acting President Aden Mohamed Nur "Madobe" remains a possible spoiler in this process. Senior Advisor Yates met with the Prime Minister, who appealed for funding for security forces and said the Joint Security forces were doing well in the aftermath of the Ethiopian withdrawal from Mogadishu. ARS Chairman Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed said the ARS has their list of MP-nominees ready, but did not reveal his own intentions regarding leadership positions in the Government of National Unity. Yates and the Ambassador have been in close touch with the full range of Somali actors, and are coordinating closely with the SRSG. End Summary.

Committee Agrees
on Working Group Proposal

12. (C) The joint Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) High Level Committee (HLC) convened in Djibouti on January 15 with the intention of providing a road map to unity government including electing a new president under a unity government by January 26, to meet the Charter provision for doing so within 30 days of the December 29, 2008 resignation of Abdullahi Yusuf. The proposal had been drafted by a working group comprised of five members of each of the TFG and ARS's 15-member HLC teams over the course of an UNPOS-sponsored session in Nairobi during the week of January 5. The Djibouti HLC session began late on January 15 with remarks from UNPOS, under the leadership of Walid Musa in the absence of SRSG Ould-Abdallah, PM Nur Hassan Hussein, and ARS Chairman Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. The PM said the security situation in Mogadishu was getting better after some initial skirmishes following the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Mogadishu (reftel) and noted the dire

humanitarian situation in Somalia. Sheikh Sharif's remarks focused on the Ethiopian withdrawal and necessity of a well-trained and unified security force.

¶13. (C) The two sides agreed to meet separately in their respective 15-member HLC teams in order to peruse the proposals prepared by the working group in Nairobi the previous week. Following their internal meetings the night of January 15 and for most of January 16, the full HLC finally convened in the early evening of January 16 and reportedly needed only a short session to agree together on the proposal. Although we have yet to see the actual document as approved in Djibouti, contacts tell us the one point of contention was a clause stating that if the unity TFG-ARS government could not be formed in time to elect a president within the 30-day deadline, the 275-member TFG Parliament would elect a president and then both groups would proceed with creating the unity government. We are told the ARS finally agreed to this clause. The document was reportedly submitted to UNPOS late on the night on January 16. As of January 21, UNPOS has not released the document or revealed any plans to have a public commemoration of the agreement. However, steps to accomplish implementation of the agreement are underway, and UNPOS is working with the TFG and ARS to mobilize the relevant actors for travel to Djibouti. One point of concern, as detailed below, is lack of agreement among the TFG Parliament.

¶14. (C) The international community, present in force for the Djibouti meetings, reflected some points of disagreement. The main point of contention is that some members, noting

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that near-impossibility of completing the election by January 26, advocated for an extension of the 30-day deadline. Other members, including the U.S., noted that a deadline extended in the Somali context is essentially a deadline discarded.

Speaker Madobe a Possible Show-Stopper

¶15. (C) The 275 members of the TFP remain scattered across Somalia, with additional members in Kenya and Djibouti. Madobe traveled to Kuwait with PM Hussein on January 17. As he transited Nairobi en route to Kuwait from Somalia, the SRSG met with him and urged him to support the election of a new president in Djibouti. On January 19, Ambassador Ranneberger spoke by phone to Madobe in Kuwait and insisted that he support the Djibouti Process.

¶16. (C) All stakeholders agree that in his position, Madobe has the leverage to scuttle the proceedings in Djibouti, but most believe that Madobe can be brought around. Madobe was scheduled to arrive in Djibouti on January 22 with the PM. (Note: Ambassador Ranneberger met on January 20 with ten MPs who are currently in Nairobi and strongly encouraged them to support the Djibouti process, noting that the U.S. stands firmly behind the UNPOS-led process. The Ambassador underlined that they should convene in Djibouti immediately to elect the president. The MPs noted the points, but said they were waiting for instructions from Madobe. We have since learned that Madobe has directed all MPs to Djibouti and UNPOS is organizing the logistics to bring them from Baidoa, Galkayo, Mogadishu, and Nairobi. The Ambassador personally called Madobe to emphasize the need for a transparent process to be carried out through a meeting of Parliament to be held in Djibouti. The Ambassador and Somalia Unit continue to coordinate very closely with the SRSG. End note.)

PM's Presidential Aspirations

¶17. (C) Senior Advisor Yates met with the Prime Minister late

on January 15. With regard to the 30-day deadline for replacing Abdullahi Yusuf, the PM explicitly stated that the Charter must be respected but that a new president should be elected under the unity government, which they are labeling the Government of National Unity (GNU), by the enlarged Parliament. The PM stated that a president elected under the TFG would lead to fighting between the TFG and ARS.

He also confirmed that he had announced his candidacy for the presidency of Somalia and said his motive in running is "to complete a mission." The PM also alleged that Abdullahi Yusuf and former PM Gedi, once sworn enemies, were now cooperating in an effort to undermine the Djibouti Agreement.

(Note: Yusuf and members of his family have since taken up residence in Yemen. He no longer seems to be a factor in the Djibouti Process.) The PM said Gedi's announced candidacy for the presidency of Somalia was understood to be under the "Baidoa Process," - the one in which Madobe calls MPs to Baidoa rather than Djibouti - rather than the unity government. Asked if Sheikh Sharif still harbored presidential ambitions, the PM said Sheikh Sharif had asked for the PM's support approximately two weeks earlier. When reminded that Sheikh Sharif's possible election to the presidency would preclude the PM from serving in the TFG, the PM said, "we'll discuss." The PM noted that ARS wants full inclusion in the TFG, but that ARS will most likely be unsatisfied for one or two years as the integration takes place.

Sheikh Sharif Says ARS
Ready to Participate

18. (C) During a meeting with Sheikh Sharif even later on January 15, Yates was told that the ARS had its list of MP-nominees ready. Sheikh Sharif reaffirmed the ARS' determination to adhere to the 30-day deadline, noting that the Djibouti Process would suffer a loss of momentum if the deadline was allowed to slide. Asked about Madobe's power to spoil the Djibouti Process, former TFG Speaker Sheikh Hassan

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Aden said the Djibouti Process is about institutions, not individuals, adding that anyone calling an election in Baidoa would be responsible for "a new civil war." Sheikh Sharif did not offer any information on his ambitions for positions in the TFG leadership.

Security in Mogadishu

19. (C) The Prime Minister spent much of the meeting appealing for funds for the joint security force. He said AU Ambassador Nicholas Bwakira had told him that AMISOM could pay 2,500 joint security troops for 3-4 months at a rate of USD 100 per month in salary and USD 50 per month in food allowance. Both the PM and Sheikh Sharif said the security situation in Mogadishu was improving after an initial period of confusion following the Ethiopian withdrawal. The PM offered details that corresponded with reftel, adding that command and control responsibilities were becoming more clear as time passed. Sheikh Sharif praised the work of the joint security forces, and gave himself some credit in stating that his arrival in Mogadishu signaled to all Somalis that the ARS was dedicated to the Djibouti Process.

RANNEBERGER